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DATE: 1/17/01
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**Baluchistan:
Pakistan's Troubled Province**

Pakistan's Baluchistan Province has remained relatively peaceful since the insurgency ended in 1977, but public order has slowly deteriorated over the past year. Islamabad's influence in the important Marri tribal area has been undermined by guerrillas returning from self-imposed exile in Afghanistan. The chief of the Marris—the most powerful and militant of the Baluch tribes—has been living in Kabul for over a year and [REDACTED] claims to have Soviet assistance for a planned confrontation between the Baluch and Islamabad.

The killing of five Pakistani soldiers, including the commander of the Sibi Scouts,¹ in an ambush early this year [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] have raised tensions in the province and may presage a period of increasing incidents. Islamabad so far has avoided a confrontation with the Marris, but the government's weak response could embolden the guerrillas. The Zia regime will avoid using the Army for internal security in Baluchistan as long as it can depend on paramilitary Frontier Corps units like the Sibi Scouts to maintain a modicum of order. The guerrillas still need to convince most Baluch tribesmen and their chiefs that an insurgency would pay off, although pressures from Afghan refugees and disputes over how Baluchistan is to be developed are issues that could play into their hands.

Return of the "Ferraris"

[REDACTED] well-armed bands of "ferraris"—tribal guerrillas who fought in the 1974-77 insurgency—have been returning over the past year to set up camps in inaccessible parts of the Marri tribal area north and east of Sibi.

¹ The Sibi Scouts are an element in the Baluchistan Frontier Corps. These are paramilitary forces led by Pakistan Army officers.

[REDACTED] The ferraris apparently are loyal to Khair Bakhsh Marri, the most independent of the radical sardars (chiefs), and to a lesser extent to Sardar Ataullah Khan Mengal. Mengal, presently in exile in London, has called on the Baluch to prepare themselves for a war of liberation from Pakistan.

The returning guerrillas reportedly are well armed with light machineguns, AK-47s, and G-3 rifles and well supplied with binoculars, radios, and other field equipment. [REDACTED] the guerrillas also have heavy machineguns, which are transported by donkey along the rugged mountain trails of Baluchistan.

[REDACTED] Ferrari patrols closely monitored a well-guarded seismic survey party working north of Sibi last summer.

[REDACTED] Ferrari bands of 40 to 80 guerrillas are moving about in Marri and possibly in Mengal and Bugti tribal areas. They claim to have Soviet support for an eventual war of liberation.

[REDACTED] they have succeeded in undermining government authority among the few Marris who have cooperated with Islamabad. They have urged tribesmen to forgo government loans and bring their disputes to tribal chiefs for solution rather than to the local authorities.

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Under the leadership of Khair Bakhsh Marri, the ferraris have targeted Islamabad's efforts to develop Baluchistan and exploit its resources. Coal mining in Chamala —reached by a 75-mile-long railway spur from Sibi —has been shut down by the ferraris for more than a year. The guerrillas have also warned provincial authorities at Quetta that they would oppose oil exploration efforts in tribal areas. The most recent survey was carried out last summer in the Marri area under the protection of the Sibi Scouts and with an explicit warning to the ferraris that, if necessary, the Pakistan Army would be called out to protect the survey parties.

The ferraris also oppose Islamabad's efforts to open up Baluchistan by expanding the road network. The government has been surveying a road from Dera Ghazi Khan in Punjab to Sibi that would run through Marri territory. Officials in both Sibi and the Kohlu Agency received letters threatening violence if the survey proceeded, according to a reliable source. Early this year, after survey work began on the western end of the road, a ferrari band ambushed a road security survey group led by the commander of the Sibi Scouts, killing the colonel and four of his troops. Some officials believe the incident was timed to coincide with President Zia's visit to Quetta, the provincial capital.

Islamabad's Response

The government's response to the Sibi incident appeared weak and vacillating, at least in part because high officials were preoccupied with President Zia's concurrent visit to Quetta. The authorities waited for three days before taking into custody Sher Muhammad Marri, the popular hero of an earlier insurgency and the leader that Pakistani officials regard as the chief overt lieutenant of Khair Bakhsh Marri inside Pakistan. the subtribe involved in the ambush would not have acted without Sher Muhammad's blessing. Once in custody, Sher Muhammad implicitly warned the government that any retaliation against the Marris would renew the insurgency, but this time with Soviet assistance. Seeking to avoid a confrontation, Islamabad released Sher

Muhammad Marri after a week. It also upgraded security along the Sibi-Harnai railway line.

Baluchistan Governor Rahimuddin has avoided retaliating because he is unwilling to admit to Islamabad that his province has a serious security problem and is trying to pass the ambush off as an isolated incident.

the government's lack of response has hurt Lieutenant General Rahimuddin's prestige with the Baluch and could seriously erode public order in the province. It has also undermined the credibility of the provincial administration and caused morale problems among the Sibi Scouts. Rahimuddin, however, has ordered that work on the road project be continued and that increased security be implemented to protect the survey crews.

The Marri-Bugti Settlement

Provincial authorities are also worried that a recent settlement of disputes between the Marri and Bugti tribes will reduce their own leverage in dealing with two of Baluchistan's most powerful tribes. Old enemies, the two neighboring tribes have consistently taken opposite sides on political issues. The Bugti Sardar, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, served as Governor of Baluchistan after Prime Minister Bhutto ousted the administration led by Sardar Ataullah Khan Mengal and supported by Khair Bakhsh Marri. Moreover, Bugti unwillingness to side with the Marri and Mengal insurgents allowed Islamabad to exploit unhampered the country's largest natural gasfield at Sui in Bugti territory.

the settlement allows the Marris access to the Sui area.

The Marri-Bugti settlement occurred last July after tribal delegations headed by Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and Sher Muhammad Marri—the latter presumably acting for Khair Bakhsh Marri—met at Kalar on the Marri-Bugti border.

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[REDACTED]
the delegations settled all outstanding disputes between the two tribes.

[REDACTED] most observers believe the agreement will hold up and enable tribal leaders to reduce traditional enmities and possibly cooperate politically.

The two tribes also agreed that the rights to mineral resources in their areas belong to the tribes alone and should be exploited only when the tribes themselves are able to do so. They agreed to oppose further exploration by the government, and the Marri offered to help force Islamabad to pay the Bugti for its use of the Sui gasfield.

The Marri-Bugti settlement may be the first round of a more comprehensive intertribal peace. A longtime observer of the Baluchistan scene

[REDACTED] reported that a tribal "Jirga" tentatively is scheduled for 1 May to bring together elders of the Marri, Bugti, and Jakhrani tribes. The moving force behind convening the Jirga is Sher Muhammad Marri, who hopes that a settlement would strengthen his image as a Baluch spokesman in bargaining with the Pakistani Government. Sher Muhammed may hope to exploit greater Baluch unity to slow government development projects in Marri lands opposed by that tribe. His efforts to achieve the intertribal agreement could, however, be complicated by differences within the Jakhrani tribe. Jakhrani leadership is weak, and a strong faction appears reluctant to settle with the Bugti tribe.

Tribalism as Separatism

Separatism in Baluchistan is supported by several groupings, all of which believe their lot would be significantly better if the area were freed from the

political and economic domination of Pakistan's Punjabi majority. The separatists are gathered in a loose political alliance called the Baluchistan People's Liberation Front, which includes detribalized Baluch professionals, students, and former students who claim that Punjabi immigrants are increasingly monopolizing economic and professional opportunities in Baluchistan. It also includes the radical sardars and their tribesmen. The Baluch movement for autonomy—and increasingly for independence—has absorbed considerable Marxist rhetoric. Disaffected Baluch have tended to see Islamabad's enemies—Kabul, Moscow, and New Delhi—as potentially their friends and Islamabad's friends—Beijing and Washington—as their enemies. Baluch thinkers speak admiringly of Moscow's nationalities policy, although much of this is based on Soviet propaganda and not an acquaintanceship with Soviet realities.

A more overt and more autonomy-minded group in the province is the Pakistan National Party, led by former Baluchistan Governor, Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo. The PNP traces its lineage to the old National Awami Party (NAP) of Khan Abdul Wali Khan which broke up in 1978. Bizenjo's party represents the Baluch element in the old NAP, which gained sufficient support in the elections of 1970 to participate in coalition governments ruling Peshawar and Quetta during the early Bhutto years. Both Khair Bakhsh Marri and Ataullah Khan Mengal were members of the NAP—Mengal serving as Chief Minister of Baluchistan while Bizenjo was Governor. Bizenjo claims to be the last link between the Baluch and Pakistan and has been trying to gain membership for his party in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, a national coalition of opposition parties. The MRD so far has refused him membership because it suspects that his real loyalties are not with Pakistan. Last May the PNP merged with the smaller National Progressive Party, which is the overt manifestation of the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Pakistan.

In our view, by far the strongest element in Baluch separatism is an historic effort by virtually independent tribes to maintain their traditional ways of life, which are increasingly threatened by economic change and Punjabi immigration or, at the very least,

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to gain control of the forces that threaten to engulf them. Although radical sardars like Marri claim to be Marxists, they have done little to improve the social lot of their tribes and operate much in the traditional mold of the Baluch sardar. For these sardars, who know something of the modern world, radical politics is a way to keep the traditional social order—and with it their own authority—from succumbing to powerful economic, political, and demographic forces.

According to numerous observers, immigrant landholders from Sind and Punjab and retired military officers from the North-West Frontier Province and Punjab have acquired much of the land newly irrigated by the Pat Feeder Canal in Nasirabad District. Punjabis have increasingly come to dominate the commerce and administration of Baluchistan as roads have penetrated into hitherto inaccessible areas. Baluch leaders fear that Punjab's 65 million inhabitants will increasingly look to Baluchistan as a vast, unexploited area. They know what has happened to other minorities in other countries that sought to hold back a land-hungry and entrepreneurial majority. Some would welcome outside—even Soviet—assistance to gain an independent Baluchistan free of domination by a largely Punjabi bureaucracy and Army.

the Baluch are also increasingly alarmed at the continuing influx of Afghan refugees, whose numbers now stand close to 700,000 in Baluchistan. Baluchistan has always had a sizable Pushtun population, whose territory extends north and east of Quetta along the Zhob, Pishin, and Kunder Valleys. The arrival of the Afghan refugees, most of whom are Pushtuns, threatens to make the province's roughly 2.5 million Baluch a minority in their own province. The Baluch no longer welcome the refugees and are increasingly guarding exceedingly scarce water and grazing lands from the outsiders. The Baluch, and to some extent the local Pushtuns, resent the subsidized living standard of the refugees, some of whom are living ostentatiously in Quetta and investing in real estate and businesses.

Islamabad's Policies

The Zia regime has sought to extend Islamabad's sway in Baluchistan by avoiding confrontations with the more militant tribes and pushing development policies that slowly undermine the traditional hold of the sardars. The Pakistani administration—like the British administration before it—has depended on forging good relations with progovernment sardars, many of whom deeply distrust powerful tribes like the Marri and Mengals. It was Bhutto's effort to break the sardars that set off the last insurgency in 1974-77. Zia has reversed Bhutto's policies and prefers to rule through those sardars that accept Islamabad's authority. He has restored their traditional prerogatives and sought support from leaders like the late Sardar Doda Khan Zarakzai, a pro-Islamabad leader of the Brahui confederacy, who have taken advantage of the new commercial opportunities presented by Baluchistan's development.

Zia has increased development funds to Baluchistan and earlier this year inaugurated the Quetta gas pipeline, a key demand of the Baluch who resented the fact that the province's most valuable resource was fueling industries in Punjab and Sind, but not in Baluchistan. Islamabad has also sought to contain tensions between refugees and locals in Baluchistan by banning "foreign-owned" businesses in Baluchistan and periodically rounding up refugee squatters in Quetta and returning them to refugee camps.

The government also has adopted longer range policies that it hopes will alter the self-contained and hierarchical nature of the Baluch tribal structure and undermine the authority of the sardars.

the provincial government is developing plans to resettle some Marri tribesmen from Sibi District and Kohlu Agency on 30,000 acres of newly irrigated land along the Pat Feeder Canal in Nasirabad District. Twenty thousand acres will be allocated in the same area to retired officers of the

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Pakistan Army. In Sibi and in Kuzdar the government has a program to restructure landholding patterns from the joint holding common to the Baluch to one of individual proprietorship. Traditionally, Baluch tribal holdings are periodically redistributed by the sardar, who takes into account customary rights as well as current needs in allotting land to subtribes and family groups. The program to alter this system had some success in Sibi, where individual owners began to invest in their holdings but has slowed down as the sardars have realized how the program erodes their prerogatives.

Soviet Involvement

Although Moscow has long had contact with Baluch leaders, the extent of current Soviet involvement with Pakistani Baluch separatists is unclear. Pakistani officials assert that Khair Bakhsh Marri has on several occasions been seen visiting KGB headquarters in Kabul.

at the time of the Sibi incident in January [redacted] Marri had recently been in touch with Soviet officials in Kabul, and there were plans for a "big action" by Marri tribesmen in Baluchistan. The fact that the incident coincided with Zia's visit to open the gas pipeline at Quetta was interpreted by some officials as a warning to Islamabad that it is vulnerable in Baluchistan.

[redacted] The ferraris and their leader—Khair Bakhsh Marri in Kabul—claim to have Soviet support, including the provision of weapons. Some of the modern weapons brought into Pakistan by the ferraris probably have been acquired from the substantial arms smuggling networks in Baluchistan and Afghanistan. It is doubtful, however, that the exiled ferraris in Afghanistan have the resources to sustain a long insurgency and would need assistance from Kabul and Moscow.

Moscow probably is aware that, without outside intervention, the Baluch separatists cannot defeat the Pakistan Army in Baluchistan. With some assistance in weapons, however, they could make life very

difficult for both the Army and the provincial administration. Supporting subversion in Baluchistan thus presents Moscow with a possible means to exert leverage on Islamabad and encourage the Pakistanis either to stop aiding the Afghan insurgents or find themselves embroiled in an insurgency of their own. Moscow may also realize, however, that support for the Baluch could backfire by alarming the West and Islamic world and stiffening Pakistani resistance to Soviet aims in Afghanistan.

In dealing with the Baluch, Moscow has, at the very least, opened up the option of supporting subversion in Baluchistan. Events have not moved very quickly in Baluchistan, perhaps because the ferraris need time to build up supplies and propagandize the population, but the trend over the last year has been for them to become increasingly confident in opposing Islamabad. The ferraris have their own objectives that do not wholly coincide with those of Moscow. Moreover, the Baluch have never looked kindly on outside efforts to control them.


Outlook: Holding on

Apart from a Soviet invasion of Baluchistan, which neither we nor the Pakistanis expect, Islamabad's hold on the province does not appear in question. There may, however, be another period of unrest there if the ferraris decide to step up the number and sharpness of incidents and draw in the Pakistan Army. Most Baluch, we believe, are not prepared to support a renewed insurgency. Large areas of the province—Las Bela, the Mekran, western Baluchistan, and the Pushtun areas in the northeast—would not be involved. Even among the local Mengals and Marris, who remember the cost of the last insurgency, there may be reluctance to rise again. Moreover, according to one sardar, most of the sardars realize they would be the first to go in a Soviet-sponsored free Baluchistan and reject Soviet involvement in their internal politics.

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Zia's policy of restraint so far has kept the situation from escalating, but Islamabad could come under pressure to act more firmly against the Marris if the provincial administration perceives its authority seriously eroding. Islamabad needs to find a way of associating Baluch and Pushtun chiefs with its administration, but so far the Provincial Governor has been unable to organize a cooperative advisory council. Zia has promised to unveil an Islamic form of government later this year, but it is doubtful that any new system will attract real support in Baluchistan unless it provides a substantial degree of autonomy for the province.



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